

## BOOK REVIEW

**Riceland Spiders of South and Southeastern Asia**, by A.T. Barrion and J.A. Litsinger, CAB International (in association with International Rice Research Institute), Wallingford, UK; 716 pp, 1995. US\$ 225.

The scope of this work is prodigious and I know of no arachnologists who would have embarked on such a programme, which presumably had a time limit. So congratulations to A.T. Barrion and J.A. Litsinger for attempting this task. It is a weighty volume of 716 pp (including colour plates) in which 342 species are recognised in 131 genera from 26 families. Eight genera and 258 species are described as new.

The main aim of the publication was "to provide an illustrated guide that can be used by both specialists and novices to identify Philippine spiders". So, have they achieved this aim? Are their descriptions adequate, do the Keys work and can they be used by novices?

The most used characters in distinguishing species are the genital organs. Thus these require clearly labelled drawings. Fig 4a-i (p. 7) is the only figure which has labels on the genitalia. Unfortunately the drawings are poor. In the text (p. 5) the male palp is described thus - 'the tarsal segment is enlarged, complicated and modified to form an intromittent organ for transmission of sperm to the reproductive system of the female during mating'. Figs 4a-f have a mish-mash of terms to completely confuse the novice. The embolus, the only sclerite which is easy to trace because the sperm duct enters it is never clear in any of the four illustrations in which it is labelled. On p. 8 we find the "epigynum is a highly complex structure and is of extreme taxonomic value, like the male's palpal tarsus (palpal bulb)". The introductory drawings of epigyna (Fig 4g-i) do not show any connection between the copulatory tube (insemination duct) and the spermatheca let along a fertilisation duct. Fig 4i which has a median septum labelled a 'scape' seems to be *Argiope* sp, an araneid that does not have a scape. Figs 5-412 have no genitalic structure labelled. I consider this a great failing in a taxonomic work. To add further confusion the ventral (external) view of the epigynum is usually stated (in the legend) to be 'dorsal' and vice versa (eg. Fig 42). The illustrations of body structure, excluding genitalia are good.

The classification is a strange amalgam of Simon (1892), Petrunkevitch (1933), Shear (note spelling) (1986) and others. In the Key to Families the Zodariidae are said to have 'no cheliceral boss' which is incorrect; perhaps 'no serrula' was intended.

I have little doubt that the new taxa are valid but regret more time for consultation with experts was not given in describing this collection. Seven of the 8 new genera are monotypic, i.e. have one species only and only one of these has both sexes represented. It is almost unbelievable in a collection of over 15,000 specimens that the 'Material examined' comprises only a holotype and seldom more than one paratype; often there is no paratype. One of the aims (p. 1) of the authors was to establish sound reference collections - where can they be found and where have the type specimens been deposited?

Generic reference lists are sometimes incomplete leading to erroneous combinations eg. p. 612, *Larinia* - Levy (1986) recognised *Lipocrea* Thorell 1878 and its type species by designation, *L. fusiformis*.

Female *Achaearanea brookesiana* sp. nov. (Fig 261) looks very like cosmopolitan *A. tepidariorum*. The holotype is stated to be a male (not figured).

It is disappointing that there are few references later than 1989. Platnick's Catalogue 1988-1991 (1993) was obviously not available for checking the placement of genera in families and validity of species. There is a reference to Platnick *et al.* (1991) on p. 15 but it is not listed. Among earlier papers the omission of those of Chrysanthus (1958-1971) on New Guinea spiders is regretted. None of Levi's revisions of Araneidae are listed. There are omissions of acknowledgment to others. Davies (1986) key to families (in Australian Spiders .... Queensland Museum Booklet 14) appears to have been used in an abbreviated form for the key on p. 17; a few drawings from other publications have been used without acknowledgment.

A large map of the areas sampled would be more useful than a list of localities (p. 12). There are 336 very small (40 x 55 mm) maps. The numbers could be cut considerably by putting 3-4 species on the same map. As most sampling was done in Luzon province it scores more species than other places so in fact the distribution may be more about numbers of collections than distribution of species!

In answer to the question of whether the book meets its main aim as an illustrated guide to Philippine spiders, I would have to say that I doubt if specialists, let alone novices, will find it easy to identify spiders beyond the genus level. However the book adds much to our knowledge of the spiders of Asia and for this we thank the authors.

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